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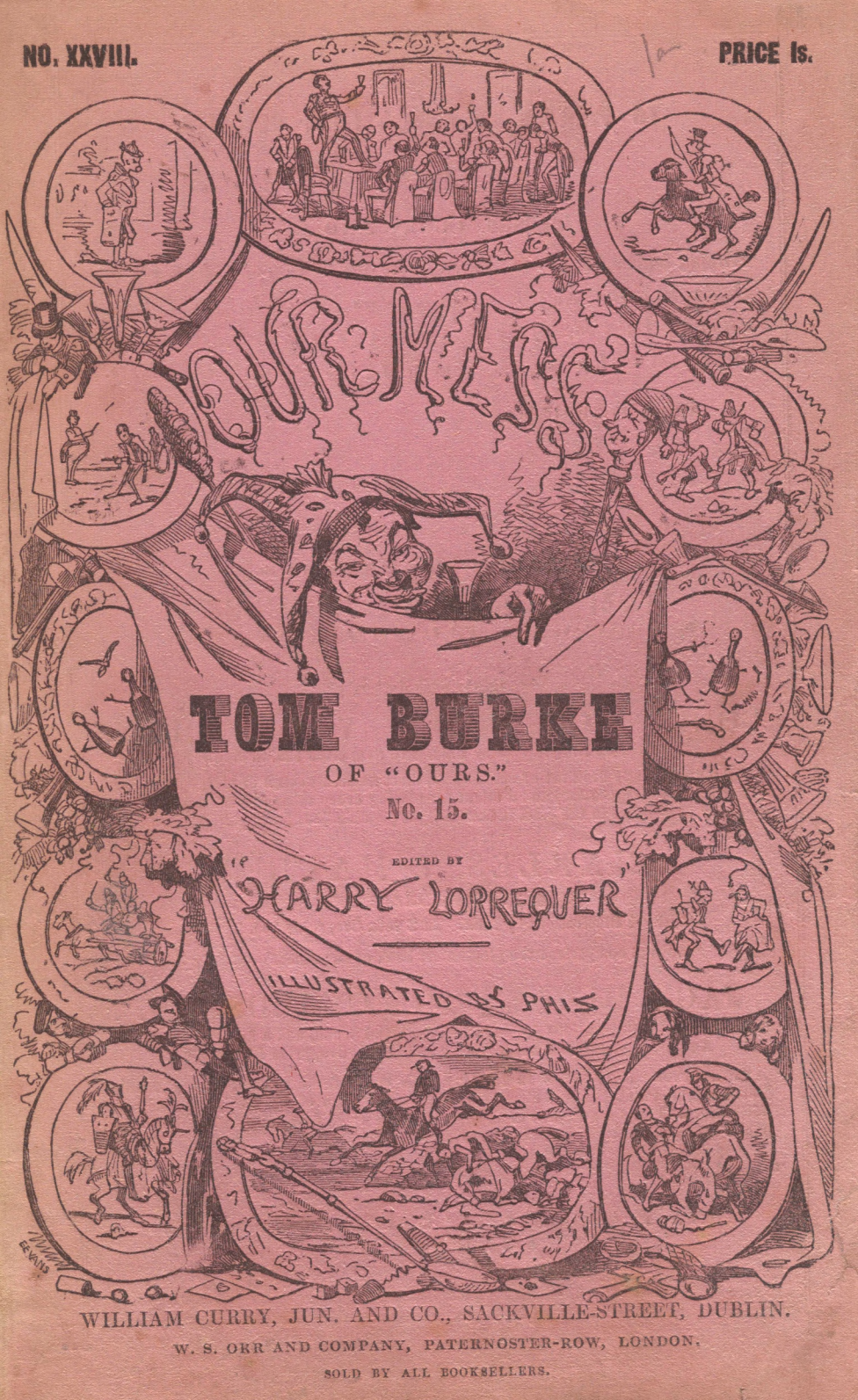

TOM BURKE

OF "OURS."

No. 15.

EDITED BY

HARRY LORREQUER

ILLUSTRATED BY PHIZ

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The Drummer who didn't mind a hole in his skin.

Fighting their battles o'er again

CHAPTER LVIII.

"THE CHEVALIER."

When men of high courage and proud hearts meet with reverses in life, our anxiety is rather to learn what new channel their thoughts and exertions will take in future, than to hear how they have borne up under misfortune. I knew Duchesne too well to suppose that any turn of fate would find him wholly unprepared; but still, a public reprimand, and from the lips of the Emperor too, was of a nature to wound him to the quick; and I could not guess, nor picture to myself in what way he would bear it. The loss of grade itself was a thing of consequence; as the service of the "*élite*" was reckoned a certain promotion—not to speak of—what to him was far more important—the banishment from Paris and its salons, to some gloomy and distant encampment. In speculations like these, I returned to my quarters, where I was surprised to discover that the chevalier had not been since morning. I learned from his servant that he had dismissed him, with his horses, soon after leaving the Tuileries, and had not returned home from that time.

I dined alone that day, and sat moodily by myself, thinking over the events of the morning, and wondering what had become of my friend; and watching every sound that might tell of his coming. It is true there were many things I liked not in Duchesne: his cold sardonic spirit, his *moqueur* temperament, chilled and repelled me; but I recognised even through his own efforts at concealment, a manly tone of independence—a vigorous reliance on self, that raised him in my esteem, and made me regard him with a certain species of admiration. With his unsettled or unstable political opinions, I greatly dreaded the excess to which a spirit of revenge might carry him. I knew that the Jacobin party, and the Bourbons themselves, lay in wait for every erring member of the Imperial side; and I felt no little anxiety at the temptations they might hold out to him, at a moment when his excitement might have the mastery over his cooler judgment.

Late in the evening a government messenger arrived with a large letter addressed to him from the minister of war; and even this caused me fresh uneasiness, since I connected the despatch in my mind with some detail of duty, which his absence might leave unperformed.

It was long past midnight, as I sat, vainly endeavouring to occupy myself with a book, which each moment I laid down to listen; when suddenly I heard the roll of a *fiacre* in the court beneath—the great doors banged and closed, and the next moment the chevalier entered the room.

He was dressed in plain clothes, and looked somewhat paler than

usual; but though evidently labouring under excitement, affected his wonted ease and carelessness of manner, as, taking a chair in front of me, he sat down.

"What a day of worry and trouble this has been, my dear friend," he began; "from the moment I last saw you, to the present one, I have not rested, and with four invitations to dinner, I have not dined any where."

He paused as he said thus much, as if expecting me to say something; and I perceived that the embarrassment he felt rather increased than otherwise. I therefore endeavoured to mumble out something about his hurried departure, and the annoyance of such a sentence—when he stopped me suddenly—

"Oh, as to *that*, I fancy the matter is arranged already; I should have had a letter from the war office."

"Yes; there is one here—it came three hours ago."

He turned at once to the table, and breaking the seal, perused the packet in silence, then handed it to me, as he said—

"Read that, it will save a world of explanation."

It was dated five o'clock, and merely contained the following few words—

"His Majesty, I. and R. accepts the resignation of senior Captain Duchesne, late of the Imperial Guard; who, from the date of the present, is no longer in the service of France.

(Signed) "BERTHIER,
"Marshal of France."

A small sealed note dropped from the packet, which Duchesne took up, and broke open with eagerness.

"Ha! *parbleu!*" cried he with energy; "I thought not; see here, Burke—it is Duroc who writes—

"MY DEAR DUCHESNE—I knew there was no use in making such a proposition, and told you as much. The moment I said the word 'England,' he shouted out 'No!' in such a tone, you might have heard it, at the Luxembourg. You will perceive, then, the thing is impracticable; and perhaps, after all, for your own sake, it is better it should be so.—Yours ever, D."

"This is all mystery to me, Duchesne; I cannot fathom it in the least."

"Let me assist you—a few words will do it. I gave in my *demission* as Captain of the Guard, which, as you see, his Majesty has accepted: we shall leave it to the *Moniteur* of to-morrow to announce, whether graciously or not. I also addressed a formal letter to Duroc, to ask the Emperor's permission to visit England, on private business of my own." His eyes sparkled with a malignant lustre as he said these last words, and his cheek grew deep scarlet. "This, however, his Majesty has not granted, doubtless from private reasons of his

own, and thus we stand. Which of us, think you, has most spoiled the other's rest for this night?"

"But still I do not comprehend. What can bring you to England? You have no friends there—you've never been in that country——"

"Do you not know the very word is proscribed—that the island is covered from his eyes in the map he looks upon—that, *Perfide Albion* is the demon that haunts his dark hours, and menaces, with threatening gesture, the downfall of all his present glory? Ah! by St. Denis, boy, had I been you, it is not such an epaulette as this I had worn."

"Enough, Duchesne; I will not hear more. Not to you, nor any one, am I answerable for the reasons that have guided my conduct; nor had I listened to so much, save that such excitement as yours may make that pardonable, which in calmer moments is not so."

"You say right, Burke," said he, quickly, and with more seriousness of manner; "it is seldom I have been betrayed into such a passionate warmth as this; I hope I have not offended you. This change of circumstance will make none in our friendship. I knew it, my dear boy; and now let us turn from such tiresome topics. Where, think you, I have been spending the evening?—but how could you ever guess? Well, at the '*Odeon*,' attending Mademoiselle Pierrot, and a very pretty friend of hers—one of our Vivandieres, who happens to be in the brigade with mademoiselle's brother, and dined there to-day. She only arrived in Paris this morning; and, by Jove, there are some handsome faces in our gay salons, would scarcely stand the rivalry with hers. I must show you the fair Minette."

"Minette," stammered I; while a sickly sensation, a fear of some unknown misfortune to the poor girl, almost stopped my utterance; "I know her—she belongs to the fourth cuirassiers."

"Ah, you know her? Who would have suspected my quiet friend of such an acquaintance; and so, you never even hinted this to me. *Ma foi!* I'd have thought twice about throwing up my commission if I had seen her half an hour earlier. Come, tell me all you know of her—where does she come from?"

"Of her history I am totally ignorant; I can only tell you that her character is without stain or reproach, in circumstances where few if any, save herself, ever walked scathless. That on more than one occasion she has displayed heroism worthy of the best among us."

"Oh dear, oh dear, how disappointed I am; indeed, I half feared as much: she's a regular Vivandiere of the melodrame,—virtuous, high-minded, and intrepid. You, of course, believe all this; don't be angry, Burke; but I don't, and the reason is, I can't—the gods have made me incredulous from the cradle. I have a rooted obstinacy about me, perfectly irreclaimable; thus, I fancy Napoleon to be a Corsican—a modern marshal to be a promoted sergeant—a judge of the upper court to be a public prosecutor—and a Vivandiere of the *grande armée*—— but, I'll not offend, don't be afraid, my poor fellow, even at the risk of the rivalry. Upon my life, I'm glad to see you have a heart susceptible of any little tenderness; but you cannot blame me if I'm weary of this eternal travestie of character which goes on amongst us. Why

will our republican and *sans culotte* friends try courtly airs and graces, while our real aristocracy stoop to the affected coarseness of the canaille? Is it possible, that they who wish to found a new order of things, do not see that all these pantomime costumes and characters denote nothing but change—that we are only performing a comedy after all. I scarcely expect it will be a five-act one; and, apropos of comedies, when shall we pay our respects to Madame de Lacostellerie? It will require all my diplomacy to keep my ground there, under my recent misfortune. Nothing short of a tender inquiry from the Duchesse de Montserrat, will open the doors for me. Alas, and alas! I suppose I shall have to fall back on the Faubourg."

"But is the step irrevocable, Duchesne? Can you really bring yourself to forego a career which opened with such promise?"

"And terminated with such disgrace," added he, smiling placidly.

"Nay, nay, don't affect to take it thus; your services would have placed you high, and won for you honours and rank."

"And, *ma foi*, have they not done so? Am I not a very interesting individual at this moment—more so, than at any other of my life? Are not half the powdered heads of the Faubourg plotting over my downfall, and wondering how they are to secure me to the "true cause?" Are not the hot heads of the Jacobites speculating on my admission, by a unanimous vote into their order; and has not Fouché gone to the special expense of a new police spy, solely destined to dine at the same *café*—play at the same salon—and sit in the same box of the opera, with me? Is this nothing? Well, it will be good fun after all, to set their wise brains on the wrong track, not to speak of the happiness of weeding one's acquaintance, which a little turn of fortune always effects so instantaneously."

"One would suppose from your manner, Duchesne, that some unlooked-for piece of good luck had befallen you; this event seems to have been the crowning one of your life."

"Am I not at liberty, boy? Have I not thrown the slavery behind me? Is that nothing? You may fancy your collar, because there is some gold upon it; but, trust me, it galls the neck as cursedly as the veriest brass. Come, Burke, I must have a glass of Champagne, and you must pledge me in a creaming bumper. If you don't join in the sentiment now, the time will come later on—we may be many a mile apart—ay, perhaps a whole world will divide us; but you'll remember my toast—'To him that is free.' I am sick of most things—women, wine, war, play—the game of life itself, with all its dashing and exciting interests—I have had them to satiety; but liberty has its charm—even to the palsied arm and the withered hand, freedom is dear—and why not to him who yet can strike?"

His eyes flashed fire as he spoke, and he drained glass after glass of wine, without seeming aware of what he was doing.

"If you felt thus, Duchesne, why have you remained so long a soldier?"

"I'll tell you. He who travels unwillingly along some dreary path, stops often as he goes, and looks around to see if in the sky above, or

the road beneath, some obstacle may not cross his way, and bid him turn. The faintest sound of a brewing storm—the darkening shadow of a cloud—a swollen rivulet, is enough, and straightway he yields: so men seem swayed in life by trifles, which never moved them—by accidents, which came not near their hearts. These, which the world called their disappointments, were often but the pivots of their fortune. I have had enough, nay, more than enough of all this. You must not ask the hacknied actor of the melodrame to start at the blue lights, and feel real fear at burning forests and flaming chateaus; this mock passion of the Emperor——"

"Come, my friend, that is indeed too much; unquestionably there was no feigning there."

Duchesne gave a bitter laugh; and laying his hand on my arm, said—

"My good boy, I know him well; the knowledge has cost me something—but I have it. A soldier's enthusiasm!" said he, in irony; "bah! Shall I tell you a little incident of my boyhood—I detest story telling, but this you must hear. Fill my glass—listen, and I promise you not to be lengthy."

It was the first time in our intimacy in which Duchesne referred distinctly to his past life; and I willingly accepted the offer he made, anticipating that any incident, no matter how trivial, might throw a light on the strange contrarieties of his character.

He sat for several minutes silent—his eyes turned towards the ground; a faint smile, more of sadness than aught else, played about his lips, as he muttered to himself some words I could not catch; then rallying, with a slight effort, he began thus:—but, short as his tale was, we must give him a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER LIX.

A BOYISH REMINISCENCE.

I BELIEVE I have already told you, Burke, that my family were most of them Royalists. Such as were engaged in trade, followed the fortunes of the day, and cried "*Vive la Republique*," like their neighbours. Some, deemed it better to emigrate, and wait in a foreign land, for the happy hour of returning to their own—a circumstance, by the way, which must have tried their patience ere this; and a few, trusting to their obscure position, living in out-of-the-way, remote spots, supposed, that in the general uproar, they might escape undetected, and with one or two exceptions, they were right. Among these latter was an unmarried brother of my mother, who having held a military command for a great many years in the Ile de Bourbon, retired to spend the remainder of his days in a small but beautiful chateau, on the sea side, about three leagues from Marseilles. The old viscount we (continued to call him so among ourselves, though the use of titles was proscribed long before) had met with some disappointment in love, in early life, which had prevented his ever marrying, and turned all his affections towards the children of his brothers and sisters, who invariably passed a couple of months of each summer with him, arriving from different parts of France for the purpose; and truly, it was a strange sight to see the mixture of look, expression, accent, and costume, that came to the rendezvous—the long featured boy, with blue eyes and pointed chin—cold, wary, and suspicious—brave, but cautious, that came from Normandy; the high-spirited reckless youth from Bretagny; the dark-eyed girl of Provence; the quick tempered, warm-hearted Gascon; and stranger than all, from his contrast to the rest—the little Parisian, with his airs of the capital, and his contempt for his rustic brethren, nothing daunted, that in all their boyish exercises, he found himself so much their inferior. Our dear old uncle loved nothing so well as to have us around him, and even the little ones, of five and six years old, when not living too far off, were brought to these "*reunions*," which were to us, the great events of each year of our lives.

It was in the June of the year 1794—I shall not easily forget the date—that we were all assembled as usual at "Le Luc." Our party was reinforced by some three or four new visitors, among whom was a little girl of about twelve years old, Annette de Noailles, the prettiest creature I ever beheld. Every land has its own trait of birth distinctly marked. I don't know whether you have observed that the brow and the forehead are more indicative of class in Frenchmen, than any other portion of the face—her's was perfect, and though a mere child, conveyed an impression of tempered decision and mildness, that was most

fascinating; the character of her features was thoughtful, and were it not for a certain vivacity in the eyes, would have been even sad. Forgive me, if I dwell—when I need not—on these traits; she is no more. Her father carried her with him in his exile, and your louring skies and gloomy air soon laid her low. Annette was the child of royalist parents. Both her father and mother had occupied places in the royal household: and she was accustomed from her earliest infancy to hear the praise of the Bourbons, from lips which trembled when they spoke. Poor child! how well do I remember her little prayer for the martyred saint, for so they styled the murdered king, which she never missed saying each morning, when the mass was over in the chapel of the chateau. It is a curious fact, that the girls of a family were frequently attached to the fortunes of the Bourbons, while the boys declared for the revolution, and these differences penetrated into the very core, and sapped the happiness of many, whose affection had stood the test of every misfortune, save the uprooting torrent of anarchy that poured in with the revolution. These party differences entered into all the little quarrels of the school-room and the nursery; and the taunting epithets of either side were used in angry passion, by those who neither guessed nor could understand their meaning. Need it be wondered, if in after life, these opinions took the tone of intense convictions, when even thus in infancy they were nurtured and fostered! Our little circle at Le Luc was, indeed, wonderfully free from such causes of contention; whatever paths in life fate had in store for us afterwards, then, at least, we were of one mind. A few of the boys, it is true, were struck by the successes of those great armies, the revolution poured over Europe; but even they, were half ashamed to confess enthusiasm in a cause, so constantly allied in their memory with everything mean and low-lived. Such, in a few words, was the little party assembled around the supper table of the chateau, on one lovely evening in June. The windows opening to the ground, let in the perfumed air from many a sweet and flowery shrub without, while already the nightingale had begun her lay in the deep grove hard by. The evening was so calm, we could hear the plash of the making tide upon the shore, and the minute peals of the waves smote on the ear, with a soft and melancholy cadence, that made us silent and thoughtful. As we sat for some minutes thus, we suddenly heard the sound of feet coming up the little gravel walk towards the chateau, and on going to the window, perceived three men in uniform leading their horses slowly along. The dusky light prevented our being able to distinguish their rank or condition; but my uncle, whose fears were easily excited by such visitors, at once hastened to the door to receive them.

His absence was not of many minutes' duration, but even now I can remember the strange sensations of dread, that rendered us all speechless, as we stood looking towards the door, by which he was to enter. He came at last, and was followed by two officers, one the elder and the superior, evidently, was a thin slight man of about thirty, with a pale but stern countenance, in which a certain haughty expression predominated; the other was a fine soldier-like, frank

looking fellow, who saluted us all as he came in, with a smile, and a pleasant gesture of his hand.

"You may leave us, children," said my uncle, as he proceeded towards the bell.

"You were at supper, if I mistake not," said the elder of the two officers, with a degree of courtesy in his tone, I scarcely expected.

"Yes, general! but, my little friends ——."

"Will, I hope, share with us, said the general interrupting, and I at least am determined, with your permission, that they shall remain. It is quite enough that we enjoy the hospitality of your chateau for the night, without interfering with the happiness of its inmates, and I beg that we may give you as little inconvenience as possible in providing for our accommodation."

Though these words were spoken with an easy and a kindly tone, there was a cold, distant manner in the speaker, that chilled us all, and while we drew over to the table again, it was in silence and constraint. Indeed, our poor uncle looked the very picture of dismay, endeavouring to do the honours to his guests, and seem at ease, while it was clear his fears were ever uppermost in his mind.

The aide-de-camp, for such the young officer was, looked like one who could have been agreeable and amusing, if the restraint of the general's presence was not over him. As it was, he spoke in a low, subdued voice, and seemed in great awe of his superior.

Unlike our usual ones, the meal was eaten in a mournful stillness—the very youngest amongst us feeling the presence of the stranger as a thing of gloom and sadness.

Supper over, my uncle, perhaps hoping to relieve the embarrassment he laboured under, asked permission of the general for us to remain, saying, "My little people, sir, are great novelists, and they usually amuse me of an evening by their stories. Will this be too great an endurance for you?"

"By no means," said the general gaily; "there's nothing I like better, I hope they will admit me as one of the party. I have something of a gift that way myself." The circle was soon formed, the general and his aide-de-camp making part of it; but though they both exerted themselves to the utmost to win our confidence, I know not why or wherefore we could not shake off the gloom we had felt at first, but sat awkward and ill at ease, unable to utter a word, and even ashamed to look at each other.

"Come," said the general, "I see how it is; I have broken in upon a very happy party; I must make the only *amende* in my power; I shall be the story-teller for this evening." As he said this, he looked around the little circle, and by some seeming magic of his own, in an instant he had won us every one. We drew our chairs closer towards him, and listened eagerly for his tale. Few people, save such as live much among children, or take the trouble to study their tone of feeling and thinking, are aware how far reality surpasses in interest the force of mere fiction. The fact is, with them, far more than all the art of the narrative, and if you cannot say "this was true," more

than half of the pleasure your story confers is lost for ever. Whether the general knew this, or that his memory supplied him more easily than his imagination, I cannot say, but his tale was a little incident of the siege of Toulon, where a drummer boy was killed, having returned to the breach, after the attack was repulsed, to seek for a little cockade of ribbon his mother had fastened on his cap that morning. Simple as was the story, he told it with a subdued and tender pathos, that made our hearts thrill, and filled every eye around him. "It was a poor thing, it's true," said he; "that knot of ribbon, but it was glory to him to rescue it from the enemy—his heart was on the time when he should show it, blood-stained and torn, and say, I took it from the ground amid the grape-shot and the musketry. I was the only living thing there, that moment, and see, I bore it away triumphantly." As the general spoke, he unbuttoned the breast of his uniform, and took forth a small piece of crumpled ribbon, fastened in the shape of a cockade. "Here it is," said he, holding it up before our eyes, "it was for this he died." We could scarce see it through our tears. Poor Annette held her hands upon her face, and sobbed violently. "Keep it, my sweet child," said the general, as he attached the cockade to her shoulder; "it is a glorious emblem, and well worthy to be worn by one so pure and so fair, as you are."

Annette looked up, and as she did, her eyes fell upon the tricolor, that hung from her shoulder—the hated, the despised tricolor—the badge of that party, whose cruelty she had thought of by day, and dreamed of by night. She turned deadly pale, and sat with lips compressed, and clenched hands, unable to speak, or stir.

"What is it, are you ill, child?" said the general suddenly.

"Annette, love—Annette, dearest," said my uncle, trembling with anxiety; "speak; what is the matter?"

"It is that," cried I, fiercely, pointing to the knot, on which her eyes were bent with a shrinking horror, I well knew the meaning of; "it is that!"

The general bent on me a look of passionate meaning, as with a hissing tone, he said, "Do you mean this?"

"Yes," said I, tearing it away, and trampling it beneath my feet; "yes! it is not a Noailles can wear the badge of infamy and crime; the blood-stained tricolor will find slight favour here."

"Hush, boy—hush, for heaven's sake!" cried my uncle, trembling with fear. The caution came too late. The general, taking a note-book from his pocket, opened it leisurely, and then turning towards the Vicomte, said: "This youth's name, is?"

"Duchesne; Henri Duchesne!"

"And his age?"

"Fourteen in March," replied my uncle, as his eyes filled up; while he added in a half whisper, "if you mean the conscription, general, he has already supplied a substitute."

"No matter, sir, if he had sent twenty; such defect of education as his, needs correction; he shall join the levies at Toulon in three days—in three days, mark me. Depend upon it, sir," said he, turning

to me, "you shall learn a lesson beneath that tricolor, you'll be somewhat long in forgetting. Dumolle, look to this." With this direction to his aide-de-camp, he arose—and before my poor unhappy uncle could recover his self-possession to reply, had left the room.

"He will not do this, sir—surely, he will not"—said the Vicomte to the young officer.

"General Bonaparte does not relent, sir, and if he did, he'd never show it," was the cold reply. That day week, I carried a musket on the ramparts of Toulon: here, begun a career I have followed ever since—with how much of enthusiasm, I leave you to judge for yourself.

As Duchesne concluded this little story, he arose, and paced the room backwards and forwards with rapid steps—while his compressed lips and knitted brow showed he was lost in gloomy recollections of the past.

"He was right, after all, Burke," said he, at length; "personal honour will make the soldier, conviction may make the patriot. I fought as stoutly for this same cause, as though I did not loathe it; how many others may be in the same position? You, yourself, perhaps."

"No, no; not I."

"Well, be it so," rejoined he carelessly. "Good night:" and with that he strolled negligently from the room, and I heard him humming a tune, as he mounted the stairs towards his bed-room.

CHAPTER LX.

A GOOD-BY.

"I HAVE come to bring you a card for the court ball, Capitaine," said General Daru, as he opened the door of my dressing-room the following morning. "See what a number of them I have here; but except your own, the addresses are not filled up. You are in favour at the Tuileries, it would seem."

"I was not aware of my good fortune, general," replied I.

"Be assured, however, it is such," said he: "these things are not, as so many deem them, mere matters of chance. Every name is well weighed and conned over. The officers of the household serve one, who does not forgive mistakes. And now, that I think of it, you were intimate—very intimate, I believe—with Duchesne?"

"Yes, sir: we were much together."

"Well, then, after what has occurred, I need scarcely say your acquaintance with him had better cease. There is no middle course in these matters. Circumstances will not bring you, as formerly, into each other's company; and to continue your intimacy would be offensive to his majesty."

"But surely, sir, the friendship of persons so humble as we are, can neither be a subject for the Emperor's satisfaction or displeasure, if he even were to know of it."

"You must take my word for that," replied the general, somewhat sternly. "The counsel I have given to-day, may come as a command to-morrow. The Chevalier Duchesne has given his majesty great and grave offence—see that you are not led to follow his example:" with a marked emphasis on the last few words, and with a cold bow he left the room.

"That I am not led to follow his example!" said I, repeating them over slowly to myself. "Is that, then, the danger of which he would warn me?"

The remembrance of the misfortunes which opened my career in life came full before me; the unhappy acquaintance with De Beauvais, and the long train of suspicious circumstances that followed; and I shuddered at the bare thought of being again involved in apparent criminality. And yet, what a state of slavery was this! The thought flashed suddenly across my mind, and I exclaimed aloud:—"And this is the liberty for which I have perilled life and limb; this, the cause for which I have become an alien and an exile!"

"Most true, my dear friend," said Duchesne, gaily, as he slipped into the room, and drew his chair towards the fire. "A wise reflection

—but most unwisely spoken; but there are men nothing can teach—not even the 'Temple,' nor the 'Palais de Justice.'"

"How, then—you know of my unhappy imprisonment?"

"Know of it! To be sure I do. Bless your sweet innocence! I have been told, a hundred times over, to make overtures to you, from the Faubourg. There are at least a dozen old ladies there, who believe firmly you are a true Legitimist, and wear the white cockade next your heart. I have had, over and over, the most tempting offers to make you. Faith I'm not quite certain if we are not believed to be, at this very moment, concocting how to smuggle over the frontier a brass carronade and a royal livery, two pounds of gunpowder and a court periwig, to restore the Bourbons!" He burst into a fit of laughing as he concluded, and however little disposed to mirth at the moment, I could not refrain from joining in the emotion.

"But now for a moment of serious consideration, Burke: for I can be serious at times, at least when my friends are concerned. You and I must part here. It is all the better for you it should be so. I am what the world is pleased to call a 'dangerous companion,' and there's more truth in the epithet than they wot of, who employ it. It is not, because I am a man of pleasure, and occasionally a man of expensive habits and costly tastes, nor, that I now and then play deep, or drink deep, or follow up, with passionate determination, any ruling propensity of the moment; but because I am a discontented and an unsettled man, who has a vague ambition of being something, he knows not what, by means he knows not how; ever willing to throw himself into an enterprize where the prize is great, and the risk greater, and yet never able to warm his wishes into enthusiasm, nor his belief into a conviction. In a word, a Frenchman, born a Legitimist, reared a Democrat, educated an Imperialist, and turned adrift upon the world a Scoffer—such men as I am, are dangerous companions; and when they increase, (as they are likely to do in our state of society,) will be still more dangerous citizens. But come, my good friend, don't look dismayed, nor distend your nostrils as if you were on the scent for a smell of brimstone—'Sathan s'en va!'" With these words he arose and held out his hand to me. "Don't let your Napoleonite ardour ooze out too rapidly, Burke, and you'll be a Marshal of France yet; there are great prizes in the wheel, to be had by those who strive for them. Adieu!"

"But we shall meet, Duchesne!"

"I hope so. The time may come, perhaps, when we may be intimate, without alarming the police of the department. But, for the present, I am about to leave Paris; some friends in the south have been kind enough to invite me to visit them, and I start this afternoon." We shook hands once more, and Duchesne moved towards the door; then, turning suddenly about, he said:—"Apropos of another matter—this Mademoiselle de Lacostellerie."

"What of her?" said I, with some curiosity in my tone.

"Why, I have a kind of half suspicion, ripening into something like an assurance, that when we meet again, she may be Madame Burke."

"What nonsense! my dear friend—the absurdity——

"There is none whatever. An acquaintance begun like yours, is very suggestive of such a termination. When the lady is saucy and the gentleman shy, the game stands usually thus, the one needs control, and the other lacks courage. Let them change the cards, and see what comes of it."

"You are wrong, Duchesne—all wrong."

"Be it so. I have been so often right, I can afford a false prediction without losing all my character as prophet. Adieu."

No sooner was I alone than I sat down to think over what he had said. The improbability, nay, as it seemed to me, the all but impossibility of such an event as he foretold, seemed not less now than when first I heard it; but somehow, I felt a kind of internal satisfaction, a sense of gratified vanity, to think that to so acute an observer as Duchesne, such a circumstance did not appear even unreasonable. How hard is it to call in reason against the assault of flattery! how difficult to resist the force of an illusion by any appeal to our good sense and calmer judgment. It must not be supposed from this, that I seriously contem platedsuch a possible turn of fortune—far less, wished for it. No: my satisfaction had a different source. It lay in the thought that I, the humble captain of hussars, should ever be thought of as the suitor of the greatest beauty and the richest dowry of the day; here, was the main-spring of my flattered pride. As to any other feeling, I had none. I admired Mademoiselle de Lacostellerie greatly. She was, perhaps, the very handsomest girl I ever saw: there was not one in the whole range of Parisian society so much sought after; and there was a degree of distinction in being accounted, even among the number of her admirers. Besides this, there lay a lurking desire in my heart, that Marie de Meudon (for as such only could I think of her) should hear me thus spoken of. It seemed to me like a weak revenge on her own indifference to me, and I longed to make any thing a cause of connecting my fate with the idea of her, who yet held my whole heart.

Only men who live much to themselves and their own thoughts know the pleasure of thus linking their fortunes, by some imaginary chain, to that of those they love. They are the straws that drowning men catch at; but still, for the moment, they sustain the sinking courage, and nerve the heart where all is failing. I felt this acutely. I knew well that she was not, nor could be, any thing to me; but I knew, also, that to divest my mind of her image, was to live in darkness, and that the mere chance of being remembered by her was happiness itself.

It was while hearing of her I first imbibed the soldier's ardour from her own brother. She herself had placed before me the glorious triumphs of that career, in words that never ceased to ring in my ears. All my hopes of distinction—my aspirations for success—were associated with the half prediction she had uttered, and I burned for an occasion by which I could signalize myself, that she might read my name—perchance might say, "And *he* loved me!"

In such a world of dreamy thought I passed day after day;—Duchesne was gone, and I had no intimate companion to share my hours with, nor with whom I could expand in social freedom. Meanwhile, the gay life of the capital continued its onward course—fêtes and balls succeeded each other, and each night I found myself a guest at some splendid entertainment,—but where I neither knew, nor was known to any one.

It was on one morning, after a very magnificent fête at the Arch Chancellor's, that I remembered, for the first time, I had not seen my poor friend Pioche since his arrival at Paris. A thrill of shame ran through me at the thought of having neglected to ask after my old comrade of the march, and I ordered my horse at once, to set out for the Hotel Dieu, which had now been, in great part, devoted to the wounded soldiers.

The day was a fine one for the season, and as I entered the large courtyard I perceived numbers of the invalids moving about in groups, to enjoy the air and the sun of a budding spring. Poor fellows! they were but the mere remnants of humanity. Several had lost both legs, and few were there without an empty sleeve to their loose blue coats. In a large hall, where three long tables were being laid for dinner, many were seated around the ample fire-places, and at one of these a larger group than ordinary attracted my attention. They were not chatting and laughing, like the rest, but apparently in deep silence. I approached, curious to know the reason, and then perceived that they were all listening attentively to some one reading aloud. The tones of the voice were familiar to me; I stopped to hear them more plainly. It was Minette herself—the Vivandiere—who sat there in the midst; beside her, half reclining in a deep old-fashioned arm-chair, was "Le Gros Pioche"—his huge beard, descending mid-way on his chest, and his great moustache curling below his upper lip. He had greatly rallied since I saw him last, but still showed signs of debility and feebleness by the very attitude in which he lay.

Mingling unperceived with the crowd, who were far too highly interested in the recital to pay any attention to my approach, I listened patiently, and soon perceived that mademoiselle was reading some incident of the Egyptian campaign, from one of those innumerable volumes which then formed the sole literature of the garrison:—

"The redoubt," continued Minette, "was strongly defended in front by stockades and a ditch, while twelve pieces of artillery, and a force of seven hundred Mamelukes were within the works. Suddenly an aide-de-camp arrived in full gallop, with orders for the thirty-second to attack the redoubt with the bayonet, and carry it. The major of the regiment (the colonel had been killed that morning, at the ford) cried out—

"'Grenadiers, you hear the order—forward!' but the same instant a terrible discharge of grape tore through the ranks, killing three and wounding eight others. 'Forward, men! forward!' shouted the major; but no one stirred.

"Tete d'enfer," growled out Pioche, "where was the tambour?"

"You shall hear," said Minette, and resumed. 'Do you hear me?' cried the major, 'or am I to be disgraced for ever! Advance! quick time! march!'

"'But, major,' said a serjeant, aloud, 'they are not roasted apples those fellows, yonder, are pelting.'

"'Silence!' called out the major; 'not a word! Tambour, beat the charge!'

"Suddenly a man sprang up to his knees, from the ground, where he had been lying, and began to beat the drum with all his might. Poor fellow! his leg was smashed with a shot, but he obeyed his orders in the midst of all his suffering.

"'Forward, men, forward!' cried the major, waving his cap above his head. 'Fix bayonets! Charge!' and on they dashed after him.

"'Hollo! comrades,' shouted the 'tambour,' 'don't leave me behind you;' and in an instant two grenadiers stooped down and hoisted him on their shoulders, and then rushed forward through the smoke and flame. Crashing and smashing went the shot through the leading files, but on they went, leaping over the dead and dying——

"With the 'tambour' still?" asked Pioche.

"To be sure," said Minette. "There he was: but listen:"—

"Just as they reached the breach, a shot, above their heads, came whizzing past, and a terrible bang rung out, as it went.

"'He is killed,' said one of the grenadiers, preparing to lower the body; 'I heard his cry.'

"'Not yet, comrade,' cried the 'tambour;' 'it is the drum head they have carried away; that's all;' and he beat away on the wooden sides harder than ever. And thus they bore him over the glacis, and up the rampart, and never stopped till they placed him sitting on one of the guns on the wall!"

"Hurrah! well done!" cried Pioche; while every throat around him re-echoed the cry—"Hurrah!"

"What was his name, mademoiselle?" cried several voices. "Tell us the name of the 'tambour!'"

"*Ma foi! Messieurs*, they have not given it."

"Not given his name!" growled they out. *Ventre bleu!* that is too bad!"

"An he had been an officer of the guard, they would have told us his whole birth and parentage," said a wrinkled, sour-looking old fellow, with one eye.

"Or a lieutenant of hussars! mademoiselle!" said Pioche, looking fixedly at the Vivandiere, who held the book close to her face, to conceal a deep blush that covered it. "But, hollo, there! Qui vive?" The cuirassier had just caught a glimpse of me at the moment, and every eye was turned at once to where I was standing. "Ah, Lieutenant! you here; not invalided, I hope?"

"No, Pioche; my visit was intended for you; and I have had the good fortune to come in for the tale, mademoiselle was reading."

Before I had concluded these few words, the wounded soldiers, or such of them as could, had risen from their seats, and stood respect-

fully around me, while Minette, retreating behind the great chair where Pioche lay, seemed to wish to avoid recognition.

"Front rank, mademoiselle—front rank!" said Pioche. "*Parbleu!* when one has the 'Cross of the Legion,' from the hands of the Emperor himself, they need not be ashamed of being seen. Besides," added he, in a lower tone, but one I could well overhear, "thou art not dressed in thy uniform now, thou hast nothing to blush for!"

Still, she hung down her head, and her confusion seemed only to increase; so that unwilling to prolong her embarrassment, which I saw my presence had caused, I merely made a few inquiries from Pioche regarding his own health, and took my leave of the party.

As I rode homeward, I could not help turning over in my mind the words of Pioche, "Thou art not in thy uniform now, thou hast nothing to blush for!" Here, then, seemed the key to the changed manner of the poor girl, when I met her at Austerlitz, some feeling of womanly shame at being seen in the costume of the Vivandiere, by one who had known her only in another guise; but could this be so, I asked myself:—a question a very little knowledge of a woman's heart might have spared me: and thus pondering I returned to the Luxembourg.

CHAPTER LXI.

AN OLD FRIEND UNCHANGED.

They who took their tone in politics from the public journals of France must have been somewhat puzzled at the new and unexpected turn of the papers in government influence, at the period I now speak of. The tremendous attacks against the "*Perfide Albion*," which constituted the staple of the leading articles in the *Moniteur*, were gradually discontinued. The great body of the people were separated from the "tyrannical domination of an insolent aristocracy;" an occasional eulogy would appear, too, upon the "native good sense and right feeling of John Bull," when not led captive by appeals to his passions and prejudices; and at last, a wish more boldly expressed, that the two countries, whose mission it should be to disseminate civilization over the earth, could so far understand their real interests, as to become "fast friends, instead of dangerous enemies."

The accession of the Whigs to power in England was the cause of this sudden revolution. The Emperor, when first Consul, had learned to know and admire Charles Fox; sentiments of mutual esteem had grown up between them, and it seemed now, as if his elevation to

power were the only thing wanting to establish friendly relations between the two countries.

How far the French Emperor presumed on Fox's liberalism, and the strong bias to party inducing him to adopt such a line of policy as would run directly counter to that of his predecessors in office, and thus dispose the nation to more amicable views towards France, certain it is, that he miscalculated considerably, when he built upon any want of true English feeling on the part of that minister, or any tendency to weaken, by unjust concessions, the proud attitude England had assumed at the commencement, and maintained throughout the entire of the continental war.

A mere accident led to a renewal of negociations between the two countries. A villain, calling himself Guillet de la Grevilliere, had the audacity to propose to the English minister the assassination of Napoleon, and to offer himself for the deed. He had hired a house at Passy, and made every preparation for the execution of his foul scheme. To denounce this wretch to the French minister of foreign affairs, Talleyrand, was the first step of Fox. This led to a reply, in which Talleyrand reported, word for word, a conversation that passed between the Emperor and himself, and wherein expressions of the kindest nature were employed by Napoleon with regard to Fox, and many flattering allusions to the times of their former intimacy. The whole concluding with the expression of an ardent desire for a good understanding, and a "lasting peace between two nations designed by nature to esteem each other."

Although the whole scheme of the assassination was a police stratagem devised by Fouché, to test the honour and good faith of the English minister, the result was eagerly seized on as a basis for new negociations; and from that hour, the temperate language of the French papers evinced a new policy towards England. The insolent allusions of journalists, the satirical squibs of party writers, the caricatures of English eccentricity were suppressed at once; and by that magic influence which Napoleon wielded, the whole tone of public feeling seemed altered as regarded England and Englishmen. From the leaders in the *Moniteur* to the shop windows of the "Palais," an Anglo-mania prevailed, and the idea was thrown out, that the two nations had divided the world between them—the sea being the empire of the British, the land that of Frenchmen. Commissioners were appointed on both sides: at first Lord Yarmouth, and then Lord Lauderdale, by England; General Clarke, and M. Champagny, on the part of France. Lord Yarmouth, at that time a *détenu* at Verdun, was selected by Talleyrand to proceed to England, and learn the precise basis on which an amicable negociation could be founded.

Scarcely was the interchange of correspondence made public, when the new tone of feeling and acting towards England, displayed itself in every circle and every salon. If a proof were wanting how thoroughly the despotism of Napoleon had penetrated into the very core of society, here was a striking one: not only were many of the *détenus*

liberated, and sent back to England, but were *fêted* and entertained at the various towns they stopped at on their way, and every expedient practised to make them satisfied with the treatment they had received on the soil of France.

An English guest was deemed an irresistible attraction at a dinner party; and the most absurd attempts at imitation of English habits, dress, and language, were introduced into society, as the last "mode," and extolled as the very pinnacle of fashionable excellence.

It would be easy for me here to cite some strange instances of this new taste; but I already feel that I have wandered from my own path, and owe an apology to my reader for invading precincts which scarce become me. Yet, may I observe here, and the explanation will serve once for all, I have been more anxious in this "true history" to preserve some passing record of the changeful features of an eventful period in Europe, than merely to chronicle personal adventures, which, although not devoid of vicissitudes, are still so insignificant in the great events by which they were surrounded. The Consulate, the Empire, and the Restoration, were three great tableaux, differing in their groupings and colour; but each part of one mighty whole, links in the great chain, and evidencing the changeful aspect of a nation crouching beneath tyranny, or dwindling under imbecility and dotage.

I have said the English were the vogue in Paris; and so they were, but especially in those salons which reflected the influence of the court, and where the tone of the Tuileries was revered as law.

Every member of the government, or all who were even remotely connected with it, at once adopted the reigning mode; and to be "*a l'Anglais*," became now as much the type of fashion, as ever it had been directly the opposite. Only such as were in the confidence of Fouché and his schemes, knew how hollow all this display of friendly feeling was, nor how ready the government held themselves to assume their former attitude of defiance, when circumstances should render it advisable.

Among those who speedily took up the tone of the Imperial counsels, the salons of the Hotel Clichy were conspicuous. English habits, as regarded table equipage, English servants, even to English cookery, did French politeness extend its complaisance; and many of the commonest habitudes and least cultivated tastes were imported, as the daily observances of fashionable people "*outre mer*."

In this headlong Anglo-mania, my English birth and family—I say English, because, abroad, the petty distinctions of Irishman or Scotchman are not attended to—marked me out for peculiar attention in society; and although my education and residence in France had well nigh rubbed off all, or the greater part of my national peculiarities, yet the flatterers of the day found abundant traits to admire, in what they recognized as my John Bull characteristics. And in this way, a blunder in French, a mistake in grammar, or a false accentuation, became actually a *succés de salon*.

Though I could not help smiling at the absurdity of a vogue, whose

violence alone indicated its unlikeliness to last, yet I had sufficient of the spirit of my adopted country to benefit by it, while it did exist, and never spent a single day out of company.

At the Hotel Clichy, I was a constant guest, and while with Mademoiselle de Lacostellerie my acquaintance made little progress, with the Countess I became a special favourite. She, honouring me so far as to take me into her secret counsels, and tell me all the little nothings which Fouché usually disseminated as state secrets, and circulated twice or thrice a week throughout Paris. From him, too, she learned the names of the various English who each day arrived in Paris from Verdun, and thus contrived to have a succession of those favoured guests at her dinner and evening parties.

During all this time, as I have said, my intimacy with mademoiselle advanced but slowly, and certainly showed slight prospect of verifying the prophecy of Duchesne at parting. Her manner had, indeed, lost its cold and haughty tone, but in lieu of it, there was a flippant, half impertinent *moqueur* spirit, which, however, easily turned to advantage by a man of the world, like the chevalier, was terribly disconcerting to a less forward and less enterprising person like myself. Dobretski still continued an invalid, and, although she never mentioned his name, nor alluded to him in any instance, I could see that she suspected I knew something more of his illness, and the cause of it, than I had ever confessed. It matters little what the subject of it be—let a secret once exist between a young man and a young woman; let there be the tacit understanding that they mutually know of something, of which others are in ignorance, and from that moment a species of intelligence is established between them, of the most dangerous kind. They may not be disposed to like each other; there may be attachments elsewhere; there may be a hundred reasons why love should not enter into the case: yet, will there be a conscious sense of this hidden link which binds them, strangely at variance with their ordinary regard for each other, eternally mingling in all their intercourse, and suggesting modes of acting and thinking, at variance with the true tenor of the acquaintanceship.

Such then was my position at the Hotel de Clichy, at which I was almost daily a visitor or a guest. In the morning to hear the chit chat of the day; the changes talked of in the administration; the intended plans of the Emperor, or the last modes in dress introduced by the Empress, whose taste in costume and extravagant habits were much more popular with the trades-people, than with Napoleon.

An illness of a few days' duration had confined me to the Luxembourg, and unhappily deprived me of the court ball, for which I had received my invitation several weeks before; it seemed as if my fate forbade any chance of my even seeing her once more, whose presence in Paris was the great hope I held out to myself when coming. Already a rumour was afloat that several officers had received orders to join their regiments, and now I began to fear lest I should leave the capital without meeting her, and was thinking of some plan by which I could attain that object, when a note arrived from Mademoiselle de La-

costellerie, written with more than her usual cordiality, and inviting me to dinner on the following day, with a very small party, but when I should meet one of my oldest friends.

I thought of every one in turn, who could be meant under the designation, but without ever satisfying my mind, that I had hit upon the right one. Tascher it could not be, for the very last accounts I had seen from Germany spoke of him as with his regiment. My curiosity was sufficiently excited to make me accept the invitation, and true to time, I found myself at the Hotel Clichy at the hour appointed.

On entering the salon, I discovered that I was alone; none of the guests had as yet arrived, nor had the ladies of the house made their appearance, and I lounged about the splendid drawing room, where every appliance of luxury was multiplied—pictures, vases, statues, and bronzes abounded, for the apartments had all the ample proportions of a gallery. Battle scenes, from the great events of the Italian and Egyptian campaigns, busts of celebrated generals, and portraits of several of the marshals, from the pencils of Gerard and David—but more than all, was I struck by one picture. It was a likeness of Pauline herself in the costume of a Spanish peasant; never had artist caught more of the character of his subject, than in that brilliant sketch—for it was no more, the proud tone of the expression, the large full eye, beaming a bright defiance; the haughty curl of the lip, the determined air of the figure, as she stood one foot in advance, and the arms hanging easily on either side, all conveyed an impression of high resolve, and proud determination quite her own.

I was leaning over the back of a chair, my eye steadfastly fixed on the painting, when I heard a slight rustling of a dress near me. I turned about. It was mademoiselle herself. Although the light of the apartment was tempered by the closed jalousies, and scarcely more than a mere twilight admitted, I could perceive that she coloured, and seemed confused, as she said—"I hope you don't think that picture is a likeness?"

"And yet," said I hesitatingly, "there is much that reminds me of you, I mean—I can discover——."

"Say it frankly, sir. You think that saucy look is not from mere fancy. I deemed you a closer observer—but no matter. You have been ill, I trust you are recovered again."

"Oh, a mere passing indisposition, which unfortunately came at the moment of the court ball; you were there of course."

"Yes, it was there we had the pleasure to meet your friend, the General; but perhaps, this is indiscreet on my part. I believe, indeed I promised to say nothing of him."

"The General! Do you mean General D'Auvergne?"

"That much I will answer you—I do not. But ask me no more questions. Your patience will not be submitted to a long trial; he dines with us to-day."

I made no reply, but began to ponder over in my mind who the General in question could be.

"There, pray do not worry yourself about what a few moments will reveal for you, without any guessing. How strange it is, the intense feeling of curiosity people are afflicted with, who themselves have secrets."

"But I have none, mademoiselle, at least none worth the telling."

"Perhaps," replied she saucily; "but here come our guests." Several persons entered the salon at this moment, with each of whom I was slightly acquainted; they were either members of the government, or generals on the staff. The countess herself soon after made her appearance, and now, we only waited for the individual so distinctively termed "my friend," to complete the party.

"Pauline has kept our secret I hope," said the countess to me. "I shall be sadly disappointed if anything mars this surprise."

Who can it be? thought I, or is the whole thing some piece of badinage got up at my expense? Scarcely had the notion struck me, when a servant flung wide the folding doors, and announced Le General somebody, but so mumbled was the word, the nearest thing I could make of it was "Bulletin." This time, however, my curiosity suffered no long delay, for quickly after the announcement, a portly personage in an English uniform, entered hastily, and approaching madame, kissed her hand with a most gallant air; then turning to mademoiselle, he performed a similar ceremony. All this time my eyes were rivetted upon him, without my being able to make the most remote guess as to who he was.

"Must I introduce you gentlemen?" said the countess. "Captain Burke."

"Eh! what! my old friend—my boy Tom; this you, with all that moustache; delighted to see you," cried the large unknown, grasping me by the hands, and shaking them with a cordiality, I had not known for many a year.

"Really, sir," said I, "I am but too happy to be recognised, but a most unfortunate memory——"

"Memory lad! I never forgot anything in life. I remember the doctor shaking the snow off his boots, the night I was born; a devilish cold December; we lived at Benhungeramud in the Himalaya."

"What!" cried I. "Is this Captain Bubbleton, my old and kind friend?"

"General, Tom—Lieutenant-General Bubbleton, with your leave," said he, correcting me. "How the boy has grown; I remember him when he was scarce so high."

"But my dear Captain—."

"General, Lieutenant-General—."

"Well, Lieutenant-General, to what happy chance do we owe the pleasure of seeing you here?"

"War, boy, the old story; but we shall have time enough to talk over these things, and, I see, we are detaining the countess." So saying, the general gave his arm to madame, and led the way towards the dinner, whither we followed, I, in a state of surprise and astonish-

ment, that left me unable to collect my faculties for a considerable time after.

Although the party, with the exception of Bubbleton, were French, he himself, as was his wont, supported nearly the whole of the conversation; and if his French was none of the most accurate, he amply made up in volubility for all accidents of grammar. It appeared he had been three years at Verdun, a prisoner; though how he came there, whence, and at what exact period, there was no discovering; and now, his arrival at Paris was an event equally shrouded in mystery, for no negociations had been opened for his exchange whatever, but he had had the eloquence to persuade the Préfet that the omission was a mere accident, some blunder of the war-office people, which he would rectify on his arrival at Paris; and there he was, though with what prospect of reaching England, none but one of his inventive genius could possibly guess.

He was brimful of politics, ministerial secrets, state news, and government intentions, not only as regarded England, but Austria and Russia, and communicated in deep confidence a grand scheme, by which the Fox ministry were to immortalize themselves, which was by giving up Malta to the Bourbons—Lous XVIII. to be king—Goza to be a kind of dependency to be governed by a lieutenant-general, whom "he would not name;" finishing his glass with an ominous look as he spoke—thence he wandered on to his repugnance to state, and dislike to any government function, illustrating his quiet tastes and simple habits, by recounting a career of oriental luxury, in which he described himself as living for years past; every word he spoke, whatever the impression on others, bringing me back most forcibly to my boyish days in the old barrack, where first I met him. Years had but cultivated his talents; his visions were bolder and more daring than ever, while he had chastened down his hurried and excited tone of narrative to a quiet flow of unexaggerated description, which, taking his age and appearance into account, it was most difficult to discredit.

Whether the Frenchmen really gave credit to his revelations, or only from politeness affected to do it, at first, I cannot say, but assuredly he put all their courtesy to a rude test, by a little anecdote, before he left the dinner room.

While speaking of the memorable siege of Valenciennes, in —93, at which one of the French officers was present, and in a high command, Bubbleton at once launched forth into some very singular anecdotes of the campaign, where, as he alleged, he also had served.

"We took an officer of one of your infantry regiments prisoner, in a sortie one evening," said the Frenchman. "I commanded the party, and shall never forget the daring intrepidity of his escape. He leaped from the wall into the fosse, a height of thirty feet and upwards. *Parbleu*, we had not the heart to fire after him, though we saw, that after the shock, he crawled out upon his hands and feet, and soon afterwards gained strength enough to run. He gave me his pocket-book, with his name; I shall not forget it readily—it was Stopford."

"Ah, poor Billy—he was my junior lieutenant," said Bubbleton; "an active fellow, but he never could jump with me. Confound him he has left me a souvenir also, though of a different kind from yours—a cramp in the stomach, I shall never get rid of."

As this seemed a somewhat curious legacy from one brother officer to another, we could not help calling on the General for an explanation, a demand Bubbleton never refused to gratify.

"It happened in this wise," said he, pushing back his chair as he spoke, and seating himself with the easy attitude of your true story-teller; "the night before the assault—the twenty-fourth of July, if my memory serves me right—the sappers were pushing forward the mines with all despatch. Three immense globes were in readiness beneath the walls, and some minor details were only necessary to complete the preparations. The stormers consisted of four British, and three German regiments—my own, the Welsh Fusileers, being one of the former. We occupied the lines stretching from L'Herault to Damies."

The French officer nodded assent, and Bubbleton resumed.

"The Fusileers were on the right, and divided into two parties—an assaulting column and a supporting one—the advanced companies at half cannot-shot from the walls, the others a little farther off. Thus we were—when, about half-past ten, or it might be even eleven o'clock, we were drinking some mulled claret in my quarters, a low, swooping kind of a noise came stealing along the ground. We listened—it grew stronger and stronger; and then we could hear musket shot, and shouting, and the tramp of men as if running. Out we went, and, by Jove, there we saw the first battalion in full retreat towards the camp. It was a sortie in force from the garrison, which drove in our advanced posts, and took several prisoners. The drums now soon beat to quarters—the men fell in rapidly, and we advanced to meet them; no pleasant affair, either, let me remark, for the night was pitch dark, and we could not even guess the strength of your force. It was just then that I was running with all my speed to come up with the flank companies, that my cover sergeant, a cool, old Scotch fellow, shouted out—

"'Take care, sir—stoop there, sir—stoop there.'

"But the advice came too late. I could just discern through the gloom a something black, hopping and bounding along towards me—now striking the ground, and then rebounding again several feet in the air.

"'Stoop, sir, down,' cried he.

"But before I could throw myself flat, plump it took me here—over I went, breathless, and deeming all was finished; but miraculous to say, in a few minutes after I found myself coming to; and except the shock, nothing the worse for the injury.

"'Was that a shell, sergeant?' said I, 'a spent shell?'

"'Na, sir,' said he, in his own broad way; 'it was naething o' the kind; it was only Lieutenant Stopford's head that was snapped aff up there.'

"'His head!' exclaimed we all of a breath; 'his head!'

"Yes, poor fellow, so it was, a d——d hard kind of a bullet-head, too. The blow has left a weakness of the stomach, I suppose I shall never recover from; and the occurrence being so singular, I have actually never asked for a pension. There are people, by Jove, would throw discredit on it."

This latter observation seemed so perfectly to sum up our own thoughts on the matter, that we really had nothing to remark on it; and after a silence of a few seconds, politely relieved by the countess hinting at coffee in the drawing-room, we arose and followed her.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE RUE DES CAPUCINES.

BEFORE I parted with Bubbleton that evening he promised to breakfast with me on the following morning; and true to his word, entered my quarters soon after ten o'clock. I longed to have an opportunity of talking to him alone, and learning some intelligence of that country, which, young as I had left it, was still hallowed in my memory as my own.

"Eh, by Jupiter! this is somethiug like a quarter—gilded mouldings, frescoes, silk hangings, and Persian rugs. I say, Tom, are you sure you hav'n't made a mistake, my boy, and just imagined that you were somebody else—Murat or Bernadotte, for example?—the thing is far easier than you may think; it happened to me before now."

"Be tranquil on that score," said I; "we are both at home here, though these quarters are, as you remark, far beyond the mark of a captain of hussars."

"A captain! why, hang it, you're not captain already."

"Yes, to be sure; what signifies it? Only think of your own rapid rise since we parted; you were but a captain then, and to be now a lieutenant-general."

"Ah, true, very true," said he, hurriedly, while he bustled about the room, examining the furniture, and inspecting the decorations most narrowly. "Capital service this must be," muttered he between his teeth; "not much pay, I fancy—but a deal of plunder and private robbery."

"I cannot say much on that head," said I, laughing outright at what he intended for a soliloquy; "but I must confess I have no reason to complain of my lot."

"Egad, I should think not," rejoined he; "better than Old George's-street. Well, well, I wish I were but back there—that's all."

"Come, sit down to your breakfast; and perhaps when we talk it over, some plan may present itself for your exchange."

How thoroughly had I forgotten my friend when I uttered the sentiment; for scarcely was he seated at table, when he launched out, as of old, into one of his visionary harangues—throwing forth dark hints of his own political importance, and the keen watch the Emperor had set upon his movements.

"No, my friend, the thing is impossible," said he, ominously; "Nap. knows me—he knows my influence with the Tories. To let me escape would be to blow all his schemes to the winds. I am destined for the 'Temple,' if not for the guillotine."

The solemnity of his voice and manner at this moment was too much for me, and I laughed outright.

"Ay, you may laugh—so does Anna Maria."

"And is Miss Bubbleton here, too?"

"Yes; we are both here," ejaculated he with a deep sigh; "'Rue Neuve des Capucines, No. 46,' four flights above the entresol; ay, and in that entresol, they have two spies of Fouché's police: I know them well, though they pretend to be hairdressers—I'm too much for old Fouché yet, depend upon it, Tom."

It was in vain I endeavoured to ascertain what circumstances led him to believe himself suspected by the government; neither was I more fortunate to discover how he first became a *détenu*. The mist of imaginary events, places, and people which he had conjured up around him, prevented his ever being able to see his way, or know clearly any one fact connected with his present position. Dark hints about spies—suspicious inuendoes of concealed enemies—plotting Préfets, and opened letters, had actually filled his brain to the exclusion of every thing rational and reasonable; and I began seriously to fear for my poor friend's intellect.

Hoping by a change of topic to induce a more equable tone of thinking, I asked about Ireland.

"All right there! They've hanged 'em all," said he. "Then, as if suddenly remembering himself, he added, with a slight confusion, "You were well out of that scrape, Tom. Your old friend Barton had a warrant for you the morning you left, and there was a reward of five hundred pounds for your apprehension, and something, too, for a confounded old piper, old Blast-the-Bellows, I think they called him."

"Darby! What of him, Bubbleton; they did not take him, I trust?"

"No, by Jove!" They hanged two fellows, each of whom they believed to be him, and he was in the crowd looking on, they say; but he's at large still, and the report goes, Barton does not stir out at night, for fear of meeting him, as the fellow has an old score to settle with him."

"And so, all hopes of liberty would seem extinguished now," said I, gloomily.

"That is as you may take it, Tom. I'm a bad judge of these things; but I fancy, that the man who can live here, might contrive to eke out life under a British government, though he might yearn now and then for a secret police—a cabinet noir—or perhaps a tight cravat in the Temple."

"Hush, my friend."

"Ay! there it is. Now, if we were in Dame-street, we might abuse the ministers and the army, and the Lord Lieutenant, to our heart's content, and if Jemmie O'Brien wasn't one of the company, I'd not mind a hit at Barton himself."

"But does England still maintain her proud tone of ascendancy towards Ireland? Is the Saxon the hereditary lord, and the Celt the slave, still?"

"There again you puzzle me. For I never saw much of this same ascendancy or slavery either. Loyal people, someway or other, were usually in favour with the government, and had, what many thought, a most unjust proportion of the good things to their share; but even the others got off in most cases easily too—a devilish deal better than you treated those luckless Austrians the other day. You killed some thirty thousand, and made bankrupts of the rest of the nation. But then, to be sure, it was the cause of liberty you were fighting for—and as for the Italians——."

"Yes! but you forget these were wars, not of our seeking. The treachery of false-hearted allies led to these sad results."

"I suppose so. But certain it is, nations, like individuals, that have a taste for fighting, usually have the good luck to find an adversary—and as your Emperor here seems to have learned the Donnybrook-fair trick of trailing his coat after him, it would be strange enough if nobody would gratify him by standing on it."

Without being able to say why, I felt piqued and annoyed at the tone of Bubbleton's remarks, which coming from one of his narrow intelligence on ordinary topics, worried me only the more. I had long since seen, that the liberty with which in boyhood I was infatuated, had no existence, save in the dreams of ardent patriotism—that the great and the mighty felt ambition a goal, and power a birth-right—that the watch-words of freedom were inscribed on banners, when the sentiments had died out of men's hearts, while, as a passion, the more dazzling one of glory, made every other pale before it, and that the calm head and moderate judgment could scarce survive contact with the intoxicating triumphs of a nation's successes.

Such was, indeed, the real change Napoleon had wrought in France. Their enthusiasm could not rest content with national liberty. Glory alone could satisfy a nation drunk with victory. Against the stern followers of the republican era, the soldiers of the Sambre and Meuse—the men of Gemappe—he had arrayed the ardent, high spirited youth of the Consulate and the Empire—the heroes of Arcola, of Rivoli, of Cairo, and Austerlitz. How vain to discuss questions of social order

or national freedom with the cordoned and glittering bands, who saw monarchy and kingdoms among the prizes of their ambition. And even I, who had few ambitious hopes—how had the ardour that once stimulated me, and led me to the soldier's life, how had it given way to the mere conventional aspirings of a class. The grade of colonel was far oftener in my thoughts than the cause of freedom. The cross of the Legion would have reconciled me to much, that in my calmer judgment I might deem harsh and tyrannical.

"Believe me, Tom," said Bubbleton, who saw in my silence that his observations had their weight with me, "believe me, my philosophy is the true one—never to meddle where you cannot serve yourself, or some of your friends. The world will always consist of two parties—one governing, the other governed. We belong to the latter category, and shall only get into a scrape by poking our heads, where they have no business to be."

"Why, a few moments' since you were full of state secrets, and plots, and secret treaties, and heaven knows what besides."

"To be sure I was: and for whose interest, man—for whose sake? George Frederick Augustus Bubbleton's. Ay, no doubt of it. Here am I a *détenu*, and have been these two years and half, wasting away existence at Verdun, while my property is going to the devil from sheer neglect. My West India estates, who can say how I shall find them? My Calcutta property, the same. Then there's that fee-simple thing in Norfolk. But I can't even think of it.—Well, I verily believe no single step has been taken for my release or exchange. The Whigs, you know, will do nothing for me. I may tell you in confidence,"—here he dropped his voice to a low whisper,—"I may tell you, Charles Fox hates me: but more of this another time. What was I to do in all this mess of trouble and misfortune? Stand still and bear it? No, faith, that's not Bubbleton policy! You'd never guess what I did."

"I fear not."

"Well, it chanced that some little literary labours of mine—(you know I dally sometimes with the muse)—became known to the Préfet at Verdun. I saw that they watched me, and consequently I made great efforts at secrecy, concealing my papers in the chimney, under the floor, sewing them in the linings of my coat, and so on. The bait took; they made a regular search; seized my MSS., put great seals on all the packages, and sent them up to Paris. The day after, I made submission; offered to reveal all to the Minister for Foreign Affairs; and accordingly they sent me up here, with an escort. What would have come next I cannot tell you, if Anna Maria had not found out Lord Lauderdale, and trumped up some story to him, so that he interfered, and we are now living at the Rue des Capucines; but how long we shall be there, and where they may send us next, I wish I could only guess."

A few minutes' consideration satisfied me that the police were concerned in Bubbleton's movements; and knowing at once that no danger was to be apprehended from such a source—were merely

holding him up for some occasion, when they could make use of him to found some charge against the British government—a manœuvre constantly employed, and always successful with the Parisians, whenever an explanation became necessary in the public papers.

It would have served no purpose to impart these suspicions of mine to Bubbleton himself; on the contrary, he would inevitably have destroyed all clue to their confirmation by some false move, had I done so. With this impression, then, I resolved to wait patiently—watch events, and, when the time came, see what best could be done towards effecting his liberation.

As I was disposed to place more reliance on Miss Bubbleton's statements than those of her imaginative brother, I agreed to his proposal to pay her a visit, and accordingly we set out together for the "Rue des Capucines."

Lieutenant-General Bubbleton's quarters were by no means of that imposing character which befitted his rank in the British army. Traversing a dirty court-yard, strewed with fire-wood, we entered a little gloomy passage, from which a still gloomier stair ascended to the topmost regions of the house, where, unlocking a door, he pushed me before him into a small, meanly-furnished apartment, the centre of which was occupied by a little iron stove, whose funnel pierced the ceiling above, and gave the chamber somewhat the air of a ship's cabin. Bubbleton, however, either did not, or would not, perceive any want of comfort or propriety in the whole; on the contrary, he strode the floor with the step of an emperor, and placed the chair for me to sit on, as though he were about to seat me on a throne. While exchanging his coat for a most ragged dressing-gown, he threw himself on an old sofa with such energy of ease, that the venerable article of furniture creaked and groaned in every joint. "She's out," said he, with a toss of his thumb to a half-open door, "gone to take a stroll in the Tuileries for half-an hour, so that we shall have a little chat before she comes. And now, what will ye take?—a little sherry-and-water—a glass of maraschino? eh!—or what say you to a nip of real Nantz?"

"Nothing, my dear friend; you forget the hour, not to speak of my French education."

"Oh, very true," said he. "When I was, in the 45th——" when he had uttered these words, he stopped suddenly, hesitated and stammered, and, at last, fairly overcome with confusion, he unfolded a huge pocket-handkerchief, and blew his nose with the sound of a cavalry trumpet, while he resumed, "we had a habit in the old 45th—a deuced bad one, I confess—of a mess breakfast, that began after parade, and always ran into luncheon—but hush! here she comes," cried he, in evident delight at the interruption so opportunely arriving. Then springing up, he threw open the door, and called out—"I say, Anna Maria, you'll not guess who's here?"

Either the ascent of the steep stair called for all the lady's spare lungs, or the question had little interest for her, as she certainly made no reply whatever, but continued to mount step by step, with that plodding monosyllabic pace, one falls into, at the highest of six flights.

"No," cried he aloud—"no, you're wrong—it is not Lauderdale." Then turning towards me, with a finger to his nose, he added, with pantomimic action—"She thinks you are Yarmouth. Wrong again, by Jove! What do you say to Tom Burke—Burke of 'Ours,' as I used to call him long ago?"

By this time Miss Bubbleton had reached the door, and was holding the handle to recover her breath after the fatigue of the ascent. Even in that momentary glance, however, I recognised her; nothing altered by time, she was the same crabbed, cross-grained looking personage I remembered years before. She carried a little basket on her arm, of which her brother hastened to relieve her, and showed no little concern to remove out of sight. Being divested of this, she held out her hand, and saluted me with more cordiality than I looked for. Scarcely had our greetings been exchanged, when Bubbleton broke in—

"I have told him every thing, Anna Maria. He knows the whole affair—no use in boring him with any more. I say, isn't he grown prodigiously, and a captain already—just think of that."

"And so, sir, you've heard of the sad predicament his folly has brought us into?"

"Hush! hush! Anna Maria," cried Bubbleton; "no nonsense, old girl. Burke will put all to rights—he's aid-de-camp to Murat, and dines with him every day—eh, Tom?"

"What if he be?" interrupted the lady, without permitting me time to disclaim the honour. "How can he ever——"

"I tell you, it's all arranged between us; and don't make a fuss about nothing. You'll only make bad worse, as you always do. Come, Tom, the secret is, I shall be ruined if I don't get back to England soon. Heaven knows who receives my dividends all this time. Then that confounded tin-mine, they've mismanaged the thing so much, I hav'n't received five hundred pounds from Cornwall since this time twelvemonths."

"That you hav'nt," said the lady, as with clasped hands, and eyes fixed, she sat staring at the little stove, with the stern stoicism of a martyr.

"She knows that," said Bubbleton, with a nod, as if grateful for even so much testimony in his favour. "And as for that scoundrel, Thistlethwait, the West India agent, I've a notion he's broke—not a shilling from him either."

"Not sixpence," echoed the lady.

"You hear that," cried he, overjoyed at the concurrence. "And the fact is—you'll smile when I tell you—but, upon my honour it's true—I am actually hard up for cash."

The idea tickled him so much, and seemed so ludicrous withal, that he fell back on the sofa, and laughed till the tears ran down his face. Not so Miss Bubbleton, her grim face grew more fixed, every feature hardened, as if becoming stone, while gradually a sneer curled her thin lip, but she never spoke a word.

"I'll not speak of the annoyance of being out of England, nor the

loss of influence a man sustains after a long absence," said Bubbleton, as he paced the room with his hands deep thrust in his dressing-gown pockets. "These are things one can feel, and as for me, they weigh more on my mind than mere money considerations."

"But, General," said I——

"General!" echoed the lady, with a start round, and, holding up both her hands. "General! You hav'n't been such a fool—it's not possible you could be such a fool——"

"Will you please to be quiet, old damsel," said Bubbleton, with more of harshness than he had yet used in his manner. "Can you persuade yourself to mind your own household concerns, and leave George Frederick Augustus Bubbleton to manage his own matters as he deems best?"

Here he turned short round towards me, and throwing up his eyebrows to the full height, he touched his forehead knowingly with the tip of his fore-finger, and uttered the words, "You understand—poor thing!" concluding the pantomime with a deep sigh, from the very bottom of his chest, while he added something in a low whisper about "a fall from an elephant when she was a child."

"Mr. Burke, will you listen to me?" said the lady, with an energy of voice and manner there was no gainsaying—"listen to me for five minutes, and probably, short as the time is, I may be able to put you in possession of a few plain facts concerning our position, and if you have the inclination and the power to serve us, you may then know how best it can be done."

Bubbleton made me a sign to gratify her desire of loquaciousness, while with a most expressive shrug he intimated that I should probably hear a very incoherent statement. This done, he lighted his meerschaum, wrapped his ragged *robe de chambre* around him, and lay down full length on the sofa, with the air of a man who had fortified himself to undergo any sacrifices that might be demanded at his hands, taking care the while to assume his position in such a manner that he could exchange glances with me without his being observed by his sister.

"We came over, Mr. Burke, only a few months before the war broke out, and like the rest of our countrymen and women, were made *détenus*. This was bad enough, but my wise brother made it far worse; for instead of giving his name, with his real rank and position, he should call himself a Lieutenant-General, affect to have immense wealth, and great political influence. The consequence was, when others were exchanged and sent home, his name not being discoverable in any English list, was passed over; while his assumed fortune involved us in every expense and extravagance, and his mock importance made us the object of the secret police, who never ceased to watch and spy after us."

"Capital, excellent, by Jove!" cried Bubbleton, as he rolled forth a long curl of blue smoke from the angle of his mouth—"she's admirable!"

"I ought to have told you before," said the lady, not paying the least attention to his interruption, "that he was obliged to sell out of

the 45th; a certain Mr. Montague Crofts, whom you may remember, having won every shilling he possessed, even to the sale of his commission. This was the cause of our coming abroad; so that at the very moment that he was giving himself these airs of pretended greatness, we were ruined.

"Upon my life, she believes all that," whispered Bubbleton, with a wink at me. "Poor old thing! I must get Larrey to look at her."

"Happily or unhappily—who shall say which—there was a greater fool even than himself in the village, and he was the '*Maire*.' This wise functionary became alarmed at the piles of papers and rolls of manuscripts that were seen about our rooms, and equally suspicious about the dark hints and mysterious inuendos, he threw out from time to time. The Préfet was informed of it, and the result was, an order for our removal to Paris. Here then we are, with what destiny before us, who shall tell; for as he still persists in his atrocious nonsense, and calls himself major-general——"

"Lieutenant-general, my dear," said Bubbleton, mildly; "I never was major-general."

"Is it not too bad," said she—"could any patience endure this?"

"Don't be violent—take care, Anna Maria," said he, rebukingly; "Potts said I should use restraint again, if you showed any return of the paroxysm. That's the way she takes it," said he, in a low whisper —"with a blinking about the eyes and a pattering of the feet. Bathe your temples, dear, and you'll be better presently."

Anna Maria sat still, not uttering a word; and actually fearing by a gesture to encourage a commentary on her manner.

"Sometimes she'll mope for hours," muttered he in my ear; "at others, she's furious—there's no saying how it will turn. You wouldn't like a pipe?—I forgot to ask you."

"And worse than all, sir," said the lady, as if no longer able to restrain her temper; "he is supposed to be a spy of the police. I heard it myself this morning."

"Eh! what!" exclaimed Bubbleton, jumping up in an ecstacy of delight. "A spy! By Jove! I knew it. Lord! what fellows they are, these French: not two days here yet, and they discovered I was no common man. Eh, Burke. Maybe I haven't frightened them, my boy. It's not every one would create such a sensation, let me tell you—I knew I'd do it."

Miss Bubbleton looked at him for an instant with a sneer of the most withering contempt, and then rising abruptly, left the room; but the general little cared for such evidences of her censure; he danced about the room, snapping his fingers, and chuckling with self-satisfaction—the thought of being believed to be a police spy, giving him the most intense and heartfelt pleasure.

"She has moments, Tom, when she's downright clear—you'd not think it, but sometimes she's actually shrewd; you saw how she hit upon that."

Would that her brother was favoured with some of these lucid intervals, was the thought that ran through my head at the moment; for I

knew better than he did, how needful a clearer brain and sharper faculties than his would be, to escape the snares his folly and vanity were spreading around him.

"Shall we make a morning call at our friend, the countess's, Tom?" said Bubbleton. "She told me she received every day about this hour."

I felt no wise disposed for the visit; and so, having engaged my friend to dine with me at the Luxembourg the next day, we parted.

As I sauntered homewards, I was surprised how difficult I found it, to disabuse my mind of the absurd insinuations Bubbleton had thrown out against his sister's sanity; for, though well knowing his fondness for romance, and his taste for embellishment on every occasion, I yet could not get rid of the impression, that her oddity of manner might only be another feature of eccentricity, just as extravagant, but differing in its tendencies from his own.

To assist him, whose kindness to myself of old I never ceased to remember with gratitude, was my firm resolve; but to ascertain his exact position was all essential for this purpose, and I could not help saying half aloud, "If I had but Duchesne here now."

"Speak of the devil, *mon ami*," said he, drawing his arm within mine, while I was scarcely able to avoid a cry of astonishment.

"Where do you dine to-day, Burke?" said he, in his quiet easy tone.

"But where did you come from, Duchesne; are you long here?"

"Answer my question first. Can you dine with me?"

"To be sure—with pleasure."

"Then meet me at the corner of the Rue des Trois Têtes, at six o'clock, and I'll be your guide afterwards. This is *my* way now.—*Au revoir*."

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